



Natick Finance Committee

Pursuant to Chapter 40, Section 3 of the Town of Natick By-Laws, I attest that the attached copy is the approved copy of the minutes for the following meeting:

Town of Natick Finance Committee

Meeting Date: February 27, 2014

The minutes were approved through the following action:

Motion:	Approval
Made by:	Mr. Pierce
Seconded by:	Mr. Hayes
Vote:	12-0-0
Date:	March 4, 2014

Respectfully submitted,

James Everett
Secretary
Natick Finance Committee

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NATICK FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

February 27, 2014

**Natick Town Hall
School Committee Meeting Room, Third Floor**

This meeting has been properly posted as required by law.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jonathan Freedman, Chairman	James Everett, Clerk
Karen Adelman Foster – arrived 7:13 p.m.	Michael Ferrari
Mari Barrera – arrived 7:44 p.m.	Patrick Hayes
Jimmy Brown	Jerry Pierce
John Ciccariello – arrived 7:13 p.m.	Christopher Resmini
Catherine M. Coughlin	Edward Shooshanian
Bruce Evans, Vice Chairman – arrived 7:13 p.m.	

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Cathleen Collins
Mark Kelleher

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Agenda for this evening's meeting
- B. Town of Natick Finance Committee Public Hearing Schedule – Updated February 26, 2014
- C. Natick Finance Committee Standard Warrant Article Questions – Article #: 2, Date: 2/17/2014, Title: Authorize Board of Selectmen to Accept, Obtain, Abandon, Relocate Utility Easements, Sponsor(s): Board of Selectmen
- D. Finance Committee Warrant Article Tracking Log dated 2/10/2014
- E. Finance Committee Budget Sections Tracking Log
- F. Finance Committee Follow Up Requests 2014-02-26
- G. Budget Book Pages XI.3-XI.14 – Sassamon Trace Golf Course Enterprise Fund, *Revised February 27, 2014*
- H. Budget Book Pages VI.1-VI.36 – Community Services, *Revised February 10, 2014*
- I. The Natick Community Services Common Guide – Winter 2013/2014 – *First Edition*
- J. Natick Sentinel – March 2014
- K. Revenue & Rounds (Sassamon Trace Golf Course) – Fiscal & Calendar Year
- L. Massachusetts General Laws: Chapter 40, Section 14

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M. Massachusetts General Laws: Chapter 40, Section 15

Meeting was called to order by Mr. Freedman at 7:05 p.m.

The Chairman reviewed the evening's agenda.

PUBLIC CONCERNS/COMMENTS:

Mr. Brown reminded everyone that Natick Forever would be sponsoring candidate forums for Selectman and Board of Health candidates beginning at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, March 5, 2014, to be held at the Morse Institute Library; and for School Committee candidates, to be held in the School Committee Meeting Room at Town Hall on Wednesday, March 12, 2014, beginning at 7 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES:

Mr. Freedman turned the floor over to Mr. Everett to chair discussion of Meeting Minutes.

February 18, 2014 Finance Committee Meeting:

Mr. Everett referred the members to draft Minutes of the Finance Committee's February 18th meeting which had been distributed previously via email. Noting that all but three of the members present were eligible to vote these Minutes he asked if there were any corrections or additions. There were none.

A motion was made, at 7:11 p.m., to approve the Minutes of the February 18, 2014 meeting of the Finance Committee as written.

Moved/Motioned by:	Mr. Pierce
Seconded by:	Mr. Resmini
Motions or Debates:	None
Vote:	6 – 0 – 0 (unanimous)

OLD BUSINESS:

Hearing Schedule Changes:

Mr. Freedman noted that the only change to the updated Finance Committee hearing schedule included in the evening's packet (Attachment B) was the addition of the Fringe Benefits budget to the March 20th agenda as a result of the vote to postpone action on that budget at the previous meeting.

Subcommittee Updates:

Mr. Ciccariello reported that the Zoning By-laws Subcommittee members had attended the previous evening's Planning Board meeting at which Articles 10, 11 and 12 were discussed. He said that Board took no position on Article 10 as this was not a zoning by-law; voted to support Article 11; and deferred action on Article 12 as they were awaiting additional information in response to comments and questions raised during the discussion. He reported that the Subcommittee had also not taken a vote on Article 12 due to outstanding questions; voted 3-0 to recommend favorable action on Article 11; and voted Indefinite Postponement, by a vote of 3-0, on Article 10.

Mr. Freedman reminded the members that the Finance Committee would take up these three Articles on March 6th.

Mr. Brown reported that the Education and Learning Subcommittee was scheduled to meet at 7 p.m. in the School Committee Meeting Room at Town Hall on Monday, March 3, 2014.

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Mr. Everett reported that he would be posting a 7:30 a.m. meeting of the Capital Subcommittee for Thursday, March 6th, at the DPW Administration building to review the list of proposed capital equipment and improvements.

Public Hearing – FY 2015 Proposed Budget:

Mr. Freedman re-opened the hearing on the FY 2015 Budget.

Community Services:

The Chairman welcomed Ms. Jemma Lambert, Director of Community Services, to the podium to present information concerning the Community Services budgets.

Revised Budget Book pages (Attachment H) for this department were distributed.

Ms. Lambert provided an overview of recent developments and the proposed budget for this recently consolidated department, as delineated in the Budget Book detail, highlighting the following:

- Budgets for the department and its component divisions have been re-structured to segregate a separate budget for Administration to cover salaries for the Director and Special Assistant to the Director, as well as some supplies, repair and maintenance expenses associated with the Community-Senior Center facility and equipment.
- The Natick Community Organic Farm (NCOF) has been incorporated into the structure as a division within Community Services.
- With a goal of strengthening the department's understanding of the community's needs, interests and priorities, staff undertook a "community engagement initiative" consisting of meetings with approximately 180 residents in twelve sessions in various settings to reach a cross-section of the town's citizens. Information gathered from these discussions was incorporated into planning for department programs and new initiatives and for development of FY 2015 budget priorities.
- Based on the above assessment and community feedback, priorities for future planning and development will focus on increasing communication regarding resources, programs and services offered; enhancing and building adult programming; expanding transportation options; and enhancing use of volunteers.
- The proposed budget includes funding for one Program Improvement Request (PIR) to fund production and mailing of a quarterly activity and resource guide (Attachment I) to every town household.

Member questions and discussion included the following:

- Transportation was identified as a particular concern of elders and youth. Attention will initially focus on getting more information out regarding how the existing system works.
- Staffing and salary budgets were reallocated to create the position of Special Assistant to the Community Services director. This included elimination of an unfilled social worker position considered to be no longer needed.
- The added budget for repairs will address needs which emerge as items in this new facility reach the end of warranty.
- The program fee structure will be comprehensively reviewed to assure reasonable expense recovery balanced against ensuring widespread access to programs and resources for all town residents.

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Community Services – Human Services & COA:

Ms. Moira Munns, Human Services and Council on Aging Director, joined Ms. Lambert at the podium to present information relating to these budgets.

Ms. Munns reviewed the mission, highlights and accomplishments of this division, as detailed in the Budget Books, noting the continued increase in all areas of activity during the past year and grants/donations received totaling \$66,316.

Follow up data was requested to correct staffing detail which did not appear to accurately reflect the reallocation of full-time-equivalent hours from this division to the newly created Administration section.

Community Services – Veterans Services:

Mr. Paul Carew, Director of Veterans' Services, joined Ms. Lambert for presentation of this division's budget as detailed on pages VI.17 through VI.23 of the Budget Books. The mission and continued growth in services activity were highlighted, as well as the effectiveness of the division Director in securing outside support and resources for the town's veterans to augment those provided by the town and the state. The requested FY 2015 budget represents an increase of \$26,063, or 7%, over the FY 2014 appropriation, of which \$23,300 represents direct benefits to needy veterans in either cash or medical expense reimbursements. It was noted that the state reimburses the town for 75% of expenditures these two line items.

Member questions and discussion included the following:

- The Director is working closely to assist several local veterans in danger of losing their housing to avert homelessness.
- Although no need for a transfer from the Reserve fund to supplement this division's budget is anticipated at this time, that cannot be entirely ruled out given the uncertainties associated with the needs for these resources.
- Recent change in state poverty level guidelines added five cases to the town rolls at a cost of approximately \$230.

Community Services – Parks & Recreation:

Mr. Jon Marshall joined Ms. Lambert to speak to the Recreation & Parks division budget, detailed on Budget Book pages VI.24-VI.32.

Mr. Marshall reviewed the mission, key accomplishments and activity statistics for this division, highlighting receipt of total income from grants and donations of \$40,350 and a net \$685 reduction in the division's FY 2015 requested budget vs. the FY 2014 appropriation.

Member questions and discussion included the following:

- The division is looking to expand after-school, weekend and evening programs for youth and for individuals with special needs.
- A "soft opening" of the new (JJ Lane) Park is anticipated for some time in May and the plan is to defer any scheduling of park facilities during the first year to facilitate full access to the area by all members of the community.
- Online registration is now available and encouraged for all programs offered by the division. It is expected that this will reduce paperwork and handling involved in processing traditional check-based payments.

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Community Services – Natick Community Organic Farm (NCOF):

Mr. Freedman welcomed Ms. Lynda Simkins, Director, NCOF, to the podium to present information relating to the Farm operations and budget.

Ms. Lambert explained that there was no budget impact stemming from incorporation of the Farm into the Community Services structure as the operating expenses were fully covered, including reimbursement to the town for salary expenses of the three Farm employees. She reviewed the Farm's mission and goals, reviewed key statistics and recent developments, as documented in the Budget Book, and highlighted plans to build a future endowment to provide ongoing support for Farm operations.

Member questions and discussion included the following:

- Under a 501(c) (3) structure NCOF expects shortly to enter into a 30-year lease and management contract with the Conservation Commission to operate the Farm.
- The DPW Facilities Management division has recently taken over responsibility for maintenance and repair of the NCOF buildings as these are town-owned assets. Preventive maintenance including painting, window replacement, floor maintenance as well as ongoing weekly cleaning will be a focus of this collaboration.

Public concerns and comments:

Ms. Susan Salamoff, Chair of the Council on Aging Board, but speaking on her own behalf, praised Mr. Carew for his dedication and effectiveness in the services he provided to the town's returning soldiers, veterans and their families. She also cited the greatly enhanced collaboration which has resulted from the consolidation of these departments within a unified organizational structure and reported that, in keeping with this, the Council on Aging Board and the Recreation & Parks Commission planned to begin meeting jointly for a portion of their monthly meetings going forward.

Mr. Hayes reported that the Community Services, Committees, & Technology Subcommittee had met with these division managers of on February 11th and had voted 5-0 to recommend favorable action on the consolidated budget. He cited the impressive number and range of programs offered by these departments for the benefit of the town's residents and taxpayers, and also the amount of outside program support received and the considerable effort made to seek out sources of funds to supplement the town's resources and defray program expenses. He suggested that it should be emphasized that the budget being requested was well below the actual cost of delivering these programs.

A motion was made, at 8:59 p.m., to move favorable action on the amount of \$1,640,796, \$1,215,339 for Salaries and \$425,457 for Operating Expenses, as printed on the *February 10, 2014 Revised Budget Book* page VI.3 for the FY 2015 Community Services budget.

Moved/Motioned by:	Mr. Ciccariello
Seconded by:	Mr. Pierce
Motions or Debates:	1. Mr. Ciccariello said many had been concerned at the idea of building a new Senior Center because the old one wasn't used, but the current and steadily growing use statistics had proven the adage that "if you build it they will come." He said he had also been concerned regarding what would happen when a key long-term employee retired and someone new would be needed to oversee this complex reorganization. He said he was pleased and impressed that an outstanding individual with the necessary vision and skill had been found who had been able to pull these departments together to work as a team and deliver the

	<p>phenomenal level of services being offered at the Center – not just for seniors but for all ages participating. He said he had been happy to see some, who had initially been opposed, saying they would never use a facility like this, who were now attending seminars and other events. He cited the work of the Veterans’ Services director and also the many volunteers who contributed to the CSC programs and events and said this was one of the best buildings the town had ever built and he was grateful to all who had contributed to making it possible.</p> <p>2. Mr. Pierce said he echoed all of the previous speaker’s comments and added that the environment of the new Center seemed to have brought out the best in people based on his personal observations as President of the Friends of the Natick Senior Center. He said he had observed positive changes in manner, attitude, collaboration and cooperation among staff and volunteers which had replaced earlier skepticism. He thanked the staff for making Natick the best place to be and for all the outstanding programs.</p> <p>3. Mr. Brown said he agreed with all the previous comments and commended the user-friendly environment which had been created at the new Center and the focus on improving quality and access for all citizens of the town. He cited the timeliness of responses to seniors’ questions and inquiries; said it was obvious to anyone passing the town’s fields how busy the Recreation & Parks programs were, and said he was especially impressed with the number of programs for girls which had been added. In commending the town’s Veterans’ Services agent, he cited a recent incident in which the grave of a deceased veteran had been missing from the list to receive Memorial Day remembrance and this was rectified following a late night call. He said he had been skeptical about the proposed consolidation of these departments but was now very comfortable as all of his concerns had been allayed.</p> <p>4. Ms. Coughlin concurred with previous comments saying this was one of the best overview presentations received by the Finance Committee during her tenure and she appreciated the highlighting of budget increases. She commended the enthusiasm and demeanor of the presenters who acknowledged and clearly valued the assistance they received from their employees, volunteers and summer help. She also appreciated the modest requests for increases to these budgets which addressed documented needs to meet growing demands but did not request additional staff.</p> <p>5. Mr. Hayes said the previous speaker had addressed many of his sentiments and reiterated the large numbers of people and organizations which supported the efforts of these departments in addition to the employees. Given the evidence of ongoing growth, he said it was very likely there would be need for funding and staff additions in the future, and he suggested the members anticipate this for future budgets. He added that he hoped there would be a reserve fund transfer request from the Veterans’ Services division before the end of the year.</p> <p>6. Mr. Evans agreed with the previous speaker’s comment that with</p>
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	<p>both the senior and the school-age populations growing, the town would need to plan to address growing future demands for services. He noted that there had been extensive debate regarding the combining of these departments and he was pleased to see that it had successfully surpassed all expectations by a wide margin. He said the spirit of cooperation and leadership shown was phenomenal and exemplary and he commended all “from top to bottom” for their commitment to excellence and for going the extra mile.</p> <p>7. Mr. Resmini agreed with the previous speakers’ comments and said it was nice to see the pride and passion exhibited by each of the evening’s speakers and the excitement about what they were doing for the community.</p> <p>8. Mr. Freedman agreed that, from all that could be seen, this department was being well run and said the fact that the prepared presentation had preempted many of the questions was indicative of the quality of the management. He said he was comfortable with the budget being presented, noting there were relatively few increases and those were well justified. He added that he appreciated that personnel resources were being redeployed rather than added to, which he felt also indicated foresight and good planning.</p>
Vote:	13 – 0 – 0 (unanimous)

Sassamon Trace Enterprise:

Mr. Pete Meagher, Sassamon Trace Golf Course Manager, joined Mr. Marshall at the podium to present information relating to these budgets.

The members were referred to revised Budget Book pages (Attachment G) for this enterprise.

Mr. Marshall gave an overview of recent activities and current projections for the golf course operation, as detailed in the Budget Books, highlights of which included the following:

- An expanded web marketing and social media presence is anticipated which will also facilitate online reservation booking via the Golf18 Network.
- The vastly improved condition of the course reflects the positive effects of the decision to bring course maintenance in house. Superintendent Kris Armando and his team were cited for their contributions in this effort.
- The maintenance staff are working on reclaiming overgrown areas of the course where trees and brush have encroached since the course’s initial construction.
- Focused efforts on water conservation as well as repairs and maintenance to the irrigation system resulted in savings of approximately \$50,000-\$60,000 due to avoidance of any need to use town water in the past year.
- Collaboration with the DPW LFNR division has been mutually beneficial with use by the course of selected LFNR equipment and assistance with brush removal and selected grounds work and snow removal by course maintenance personnel.
- Staffing for the course continues to be managed on an “as needed” basis allowing the most economical use of these resources.

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Member questions and discussion included the following:

- The lease cost for the golf carts, which includes principal as well interest, contributes to the increase in total expense and the town's subsidy vs. the previous year.
- Greater use of retained earnings to fund operating expense is discouraged until the balance in that fund reaches 10% of annual operating costs due to the fact that this enterprise does not have any reserve fund to cover emergencies or unforeseen expenses.
- Although 10-year projections show a continued subsidy from the town, it is likely this can be eliminated when the debt is retired.

Mr. Hayes reported that the Community Services, Committees, & Technology Subcommittee reviewed these budgets on February 11th and voted 5-0 to recommend favorable action.

A motion was made, at 9:51 p.m., to move favorable action on the amount of \$868,373 – \$279,013 for Salaries, \$286,611 for Operating Expenses, \$34,788 for Employee Benefits and \$267,962 for Debt Service – as printed on the *February 27, 2014 Revised Budget Book* page XI.3 for the FY 2015 Sassamon Trace Golf Course Enterprise Fund budget.

Moved/Motioned by:	Mr. Evans
Seconded by:	Mr. Pierce
Motions or Debates:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Mr. Evans pointed out that the town, with the Finance Committee's support, made the decision to bring the course maintenance operations in-house, in hopes it would save money but without certainty as to how that would play out. He said not only had money been saved, but the course was also in much better condition and he considered this a terrific course and a great asset which he expected to eventually be self-supporting freeing up some \$200,000 for use elsewhere in the town. He commended the managers for their effective oversight.2. Mr. Pierce thanked the managers for the savings they had achieved in the maintenance costs and for looking ahead to keep this operation moving in the right direction.3. Mr. Everett said he wanted all to be aware that, in approving this budget, the members would be approving a subsidy from the town of \$309,087. Although he considered this a substantial amount, he pointed out that this amount was approximately \$3,000 lower than the previous year when the subsidy had increased. With respect to retained earnings, he pointed out that these ran consistently between \$70,000 and \$130,000 and had not varied significantly from year to year and the amount generated was being used to support operations. He said he looked forward to greater support of operations from this revenue once the debt was retired. Overall, he said this was a cultural benefit to the town although never a fiscal asset, but that could not be changed at this point and the debt costs would be there with, or without this enterprise so he was in support of this moving forward.4. Mr. Hayes said he had been strongly opposed to this enterprise in previous years, unable to understand why the town supported something he considered to be a financial sinkhole. He said he had gained a better understanding now and had a more favorable opinion of this as the amount of the town's subsidy continued to decline, even though he was still not crazy about the subsidy. He agreed the course brought something to the town's cultural

	<p>element and said he was impressed with the hard work being done by these managers and their willingness to listen and revise their golf cart lease proposal based on feedback. Citing the improved maintenance and the implementation of online registration as examples, he said he believed this was a much better operated and fiscally tuned operation than it was five years ago.</p> <p>5. Mr. Ciccariello said he agreed with much that had already been said, noting he had been involved with this operation since 2001 and had seen many analyses and projections related to the recurring question of whether to close the course or keep it open. He pointed out that no matter what was done the debt needed to be paid and said the town's hands were tied due to the unfavorable terms of the lease which prevented early termination. He said he continued to support this because there was effort made to reduce the subsidy each year. He said he would like to have seen it reduced even further in the proposed budget using retained earnings but said he understood the argument about maintaining the retained earnings balance for emergencies and repairs although he had not seen evidence of that thus far. He said he was happy the maintenance had been brought in house and thought it likely the town would have been paying even more in the marketplace than shown on the projections. He said his concern related to revenues and the limits on what could be realistically expected given the limit on the total number of rounds which could be played. He said he didn't think fee increases could fully offset drop-off in number of rounds and he was concerned going forward with how to keep generating enough revenues when golf was declining. He suggested consideration be given to ways to use the course during non-golf months.</p> <p>6. Mr. Freedman said he agreed with the need for caution in maintaining the retained earnings balance since this enterprise had no reserve fund and provisions needed to be in place for unforeseen occurrences. He also understood this was a balancing act.</p>
Vote:	12 – 1 – 0

Sassamon Trace Enterprise – Indirect Costs:

Mr. Jeff Towne, Deputy Town Administrator/Finance Director, took the podium to present information relating to this budget.

The members were referred to page XI.12 of Attachment G for detail supporting the proposed indirect charges.

Mr. Towne explained that a similar formula as previously used provided the basis for the recommended charges with the exception that gas and diesel expenses had been moved from direct to indirect expense.

Mr. Freedman reminded the members that Town Meeting did not appropriate these expenses, only approved the recommended expense allocations.

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A motion was made, at 10:06 p.m., to recommend approval of the proposed FY 2015 indirect cost allocations to the Sassamon Trace Golf Course enterprise totaling \$34,087 as printed on the *February 27, 2014 Revised Budget Book* page XI.12.

Moved/Motioned by:	Mr. Everett
Seconded by:	Mr. Pierce
Motions or Debates:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Mr. Everett said these expenses would either be covered by the general fund or the enterprise and it was appropriate to offset these costs associated with running this enterprise when there were revenues available to cover them.2. Mr. Freedman reminded everyone that this was the second year that indirect costs had been allocated to this enterprise and he agreed with the previous speaker that this was an appropriate method of covering these costs of doing business.
Vote:	11 – 0 – 1

Public Hearing – FY 2014 Spring Annual Town Meeting Warrant:

A motion was made, at 10:09 p.m., to open the public hearing on the FY 2014 Spring Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles.

Moved/Motioned by:	Mr. Ciccariello
Seconded by:	Mr. Pierce
Motions or Debates:	None
Vote:	12 – 0 – 0 (unanimous)

Article 39 – Board of Assessors: Increase Personal Property Exemptions:

The Chairman welcomed Ms. Jan Dangelo, Director of Assessing, to the podium.

Ms. Dangelo reviewed the background and rationale for the Article highlighting the following:

- This is the 18th consecutive year this Article has been put forward to raise the amount of the personal exemption granted by the town to qualified residents, as allowed under Chapter 59 Section 5 of the Massachusetts General Laws (MGL).
- The proposed increase will bring the total exemption allowed to 45%.
- The estimated additional cost for FY 2015 is \$4,996.
- If this Article is not acted on favorably at Town Meeting, the exemption will return to the statutory rate.
- The additional cost for this is funded from the overlay account which has sufficient funding to cover these costs. The state pays only the standard amount.

A motion was made, at 10:11 p.m., to move favorable action on the subject matter of Article 39.

Moved/Motioned by:	Mr. Ciccariello
Seconded by:	Mr. Hayes
Motions or Debates:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Mr. Ciccariello said this was for a good cause as it supported individuals in need.2. Mr. Hayes concurred.
Vote:	11 – 0 – 0 (unanimous) (one member absent from the room)

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Article 17 – Committee Article:

The Chair welcomed Ms. Martha White, Town Administrator, to the podium to speak to the remaining Articles.

Ms. White reminded the members that this Article merely provided an opportunity for any Committees wishing to present a report to Town Meeting to do so. She noted that the wording of this standard Article had been slightly modified this year to remove any reference to potential funding as there had never been any funding contemplated under this Article. She stated that she was presently aware of one Committee planning to present a report, and that was the Natick Center Cultural District Advisory Board.

Member questions and discussion included the following:

- Mr. Freedman reminded the members that the Finance Committee's recommendation only addressed the issue of whether Town Meeting would hear reports and there was no implication of endorsement of any report(s).
- It was noted that a list of committees known to be planning to present reports had been included in a prior year; however, this was a courtesy only, and no list was required.

A motion was made, at 10:16 p.m., to move favorable action on the subject matter of Article 17.

Moved/Motioned by:	Mr. Everett
Seconded by:	Mr. Ciccariello
Motions or Debates:	None
Vote:	12 – 0 – 0 (unanimous)

Article 2 – Authorize Board of Selectmen to Accept, Obtain, Abandon, Relocate Utility Easements:

The members were referred to the responses to the Standard Questions for this Article (Attachment C) included in the evening's packet.

Ms. White reminded the members that the provision authorizing the Selectmen to accept or obtain easements had been in place for the past four years and reviewed the rationale as summarized in the questionnaire. She said the provision to add authorization to abandon or relocate easements had been added the previous year based on a specific situation which had arisen in which timely action was necessary. She stressed that no prior authorization to grant an easement would ever be proposed in this manner as granting an easement constituted conveyance of town land, and only Town Meeting had that authority. In addition, she noted that the motion for Town Meeting would specify that no town funds would be expended under this authorization.

Public concerns and comments:

Mr. Paul Griesmer explained that he recalled from his previous years as a Finance Committee member, that there was a prohibition to granting the Selectmen prior authorization to give up an easement. Based on that, he had conducted some online research and had identified two state statutes dealing with this issue: Chapter 40 Section 15 which dealt with abandonment of easements and Chapter 40 Section 14 which addressed acceptance of easements. His reading of Section 15 was that someone responsible for town land must notify the Selectmen that an easement was no longer needed by the town and if, thereafter, the inhabitants of the town so voted by a 2/3 majority, the Selectmen could abandon it. His reading of Section 14 was that the Selectmen could take easements if previously authorized to do so. He explained his concern that a particular easement might, in fact, be vital to someone, unbeknown to the Selectmen. Under the present system, an anticipated

abandonment would be placed on the Warrant thereby giving any interested citizen a minimum of 60 days' notice, and an opportunity at several public forums to bring forward any concerns, prior to being voted at Town Meeting. With the proposed prior authorization, it was possible the matter could be addressed entirely in Executive Session by the Selectmen, with no public notice or discussion of the abandonment.

Mr. Griesmer reported that he had met with Ms. White and Mr. Flynn, Natick Town Counsel, to discuss this question and had shared his findings and concerns. Although Mr. Flynn did not recall the exact reference, he said he believed there was something in the statute which authorized the advance authority and would review this further.

Mr. Griesmer stated that he did not wish to impair the town's ability to address and resolve a citizen's issue in a timely manner but also wished to flag the question of the legality of the proposed change to avoid a potential mistake which could have serious consequences, pointing out that an easement once abandoned would be difficult to get back.

Ms. White agreed that the meeting with Mr. Griesmer had been constructive and beneficial and said Counsel was researching this issue further although his earlier research had indicated there was no barrier to this proposal. She said she understood the concern but, based on the situations which had arisen in the past, felt it unlikely the Selectmen would proceed without careful evaluation to resolve any potential problems. She said it was important to balance the potential risks and benefits and felt the benefits in terms of having the ability to act quickly outweighed the risks.

Member questions and discussion included the following:

- Questions were raised regarding whether to proceed with a vote on this Article if further information from Town Counsel did not support the original rationale.
- There are no potential abandonments being contemplated at this time.
- Although the title of the Article references utility easements the body of the Article extends the scope to include other types of easements as well.
- There is a high level of confidence, based on records in multiple areas, that the town is aware of easements which presently exist.
- The Town Administrator will provide further clarification and confirmation, including relevant citations, based on Town Counsel's follow up before the completion of the Finance Committee's hearings.

A motion was made, at 10:54 p.m., to move favorable action on the subject matter of Article 2.

Moved/Motioned by:	Mr. Everett
Seconded by:	Mr. Evans
Motions or Debates:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Mr. Everett pointed out that this was the second year this was being presented and said he would be more concerned if this were the first year this had come up. He said he hoped there was a greater than 50/50 chance that Town Counsel would be able to provide definitive citations to support this proposal. If that were not the case, he said this could be reconsidered; otherwise, he said voting this evening would save time.2. Mr. Evans thanked Mr. Griesmer for bringing this forward and helping to resolve the questions. He said he would support favorable action.3. Ms. Coughlin said she would abstain because enough questions

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	had been raised in her mind and she wanted to see the language of the statute as well as the case law regarding how it had been interpreted before she took a position. 4. Mr. Ferrari agreed with the previous speaker and said he would also abstain as he preferred to have all the necessary information to make an informed decision and did not like the Committee to act without all the information. 5. Mr. Freedman said a favorable action vote was understood to be based on the expectation of receiving firm confirmation regarding the statutory support for this and he would indicate that in the recommendation book.
Vote:	8 – 0 – 4

A motion was made, at 10:59 p.m., to close the public hearing on the FY 2014 Spring Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles.

Moved/Motioned by:	Mr. Everett
Seconded by:	Mr. Evans
Motions or Debates:	None
Vote:	12 – 0 – 0 (unanimous)

ADJOURN (10:59 P.M.):

A motion was made to Adjourn at 10:59 p.m.

Moved/Motioned by:	Mr. Pierce
Seconded by:	Mr. Ciccariello
Motions or Debates:	None
Vote:	12 – 0 – 0 (unanimous)